

A  
**DISCOURSE,**

DELIVERED AT

DUNSTABLE, N. H. SEPTEMBER 8, 1818,

AT THE

**FUNERAL**

OF THE

**REV. JOSEPH KIDDER,**

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE CHURCH

*IN THAT PLACE.*

BY JACOB BURNAP, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN MERRIMACK.

WITH A SUMMARY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST  
IN DUNSTABLE.

BY REV. E. P. SPERRY.

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## FUNERAL SERMON.

PSALM CXVI. 15.

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF  
HIS SAINTS.

DEATH was threatened to our first parents and denounced as a punishment for the first sin, even that of eating of the forbidden fruit; and all their posterity were involved in that sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And to the eye of sense nothing can be more terrible or appear as a greater evil than death. Death apparently putting an end to all enjoyment and even to existence; life, sense, motion ceasing; the body turning to putrefaction, and mouldering into dust.

Had we no revelation from Heaven concerning a future state of existence, nothing could arm us against the fear of death. Death would appear as an evil against which there could be no remedy.

But revelation teaches us that it is the body only that dies. The soul, the better part, is immortal. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The children of God are removed from us; they are removed from the sight



of the inhabitants of the earth ; " they have no part or portion in any thing that is done under the sun ;" but they still exist. All whom God acknowledges in the bonds of the everlasting covenant, live to him ; they live with him.

The most high God is represented as the God of love, of mercy and compassion. He loveth his saints. He hath a regard to such as fear him and keep his commandments. Great have been the mercy and compassion of God exhibited in his word and providence and in the gracious dispensation of the gospel of Christ. He hath provided a way to redeem us from those miseries and calamities in which by sin we were involved. He hath taught us how we may be reconciled unto him. He hath given his word to guide our feet in the way of peace. Through the intercession of Christ, the Holy Spirit is given to quicken, renew and sanctify us, and to give us consolation under all the trials and calamities of life, and to arm us against the fears of death. Those, who believe in his Son, who are guided by his Word, who follow the motions and strivings of his Spirit, who enter into covenant with God, who keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them—these God acknowledgeth in the bonds of the covenant, and hath promised them the choicest blessings. He is a God and Father unto them. They are considered as children of God, and are entitled unto an eternal inheritance in heaven ; an inheritance worthy of God to bestow and most glorious for them to receive.

While continued in the world, they are under the protection of the Almighty, the greatest, wisest and best of Beings. Under his care and protection they are always safe and secure. No evil shall annoy them. All afflictions shall be sanctified unto them and in the end shall operate for their good. They are heirs unto salvation, and angels of God are sent from the court of heaven to minister unto them. God loveth them with a love that is everlasting ; a love



greater, infinitely greater, than we can conceive. Great, unspeakably great, is the love of Christ to them ; the length, the breadth, the depth and height of the love of Christ to them passeth all understanding, is above all description, beyond the utmost stretch of the imagination.

But notwithstanding the infinite love of God and the constant care of his providence ; notwithstanding the grace of God hath abounded towards us in the gift of his Son, and the rich blessings derived through him ; and notwithstanding this boundless love of Christ ; yet still, the children of God, who are called saints, meet with many and grievous afflictions in the world. Some of the servants of God have suffered trials as severe as it was possible for human nature to endure. Some of the servants of God, in the cause of religion and virtue, have suffered bonds, imprisonment, cruel mockings, scourging, and the most painful and ignominious death that the power, malice and ingenuity of men could invent and inflict. And all the children of God are subjected to death. And death in its mildest form, (if there can be any mildness in death) is terrible : when all the perceptive, and all the active powers of the body cease ; when their breath goeth forth and life is extinct ; when the body, which had been the residence of the rational soul and honored as the temple of God, becomes a loathsome carcase, food for worms, crumbles into dust, is mixed with the common elements, and in a short period of time not distinguished from them. Notwithstanding death in all or any of its forms appears thus terrible, and is inflicted as a punishment of the sin of our first parents, yet we are taught in our text, that " Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." How can death be precious in the sight of God when it manifests his anger against sin, and is executed as a punishment of it ? To solve this, otherwise unanswerable, enquiry, we must have recourse to the instruction of the word of God.



1st. We are assured that "Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord, for they shall rest from their labors." And saith the prophet Isaiah, "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." This world is a world of trouble, sorrow and affliction. Saith an inspired writer, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Though to some are allotted a greater share of trouble and afflictions than others meet with; yet none are exempted from them: Troubles, from which the righteousness of the righteous does not deliver them in this world, such as pain, sickness, disappointment, loss of friends, fears and perplexities of various kinds; the best of men being imperfect, liable to temptation, grieved at their own sins, fearful of the divine displeasure, grieved at the wickedness of others, and mourning the evils that befall them. Many, various, and innumerable are the afflictions of the righteous while continued in a world of sin, sorrow and vexation. But though many are the afflictions of the righteous, yet out of them all the Lord delivereth them. At death doth he deliver them. In the grave they are at rest. No envy or reproach, no malice, violence or oppression, no temptation, nothing that causes grief, trouble or anxiety in this world, shall follow them to the grave, where their bodies are at rest, or pursue their souls to heaven, where God dwelleth and perfect happiness resides.

Saith the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." God hath mercy, he exerciseth compassion towards those that fear him under all their afflictions and temptations. He delighteth in his saints. He loveth those, who are conformed to his image and likeness. And as death delivers his dear children from all temptation and from all tribulation; so their death must be precious in his sight. A tender earthly parent re-



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joiceth, when the child whom he loveth, is restored from sickness, rescued from danger, delivered from oppression, released from prison, or returns from captivity; he rejoiceth in the restoration of the son whom he loveth. And thus doth our heavenly Father rejoice when the souls of the righteous are delivered from the prison of their clayey tabernacle, and freed from all the evils and miseries they endured in this world of sorrow and affliction. And as death delivers them, so their death, the death of his saints, must be precious in his sight.

2dly. The death of the saints must be precious in the sight of the Lord; not only, as it delivers them from all the sorrows and afflictions to which they are subjected in the world, but also as it introduces them to a state of glory and felicity in the presence of God; "in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore." Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. While the souls of the saints are clogged with these gross bodies they cannot enjoy, yea, they cannot have an adequate idea of the happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect, the happiness of the saints in heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the joys which are prepared for those that love God." Joys to which they shall be introduced after death. When St. Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he saw things which he could not describe, he heard words which he could not utter. Should he have been able to describe and utter them, christians, in this stage of their existence, could not have understood them. By the gates of death this glorious paradise is opened to the saints of the Lord. They are thereby introduced to this inconceivably glorious and happy state of existence. That there is good reason for the Psalmist to assert, that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; they that die in the Lord not only rest from their labors and anxiety, but their works follow



them. They receive the reward of their labors, of their faithfulness and patience. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." They sowed the seed, it may be in sorrow, in toil and anxiety; they then reap the joyful harvest, the reward of their toil and suffering. Their night of affliction is past. The day of eternal joy has beamed upon them. They then behold the most high God; they behold the SON of GOD, not as they beheld him here on earth "as through a glass darkly," beholding God through the medium of his word and works; but they then "see even as they are seen, and know even as they are known." The prophet Isaiah observes concerning the righteous, not only that they are taken away from the evil to come, but they shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. Heaven is a place of uninterrupted peace and harmony. It is the rest that remaineth for the people of God, to which at death they are introduced; where are no wars, strife or contention, no sin, no temptation to sin, no sorrow, no sickness, pain or death. No wonder then that St. Paul, when persuaded that for him to be absent from the body would be to be present with the Lord, should account it better for him to depart than to abide in the flesh; yea, that he should long to depart and to be with Christ in glory.

3dly. Though a sentence of mortality was passed on man as a punishment of sin, yet still precious in the sight of the Lord must be the death of his saints; when the most high God, the eternal Father, hath provided eternal salvation for them in the kingdom of glory. He gave his only begotten Son to sufferings and death, that he might redeem them from the power of death and the grave. We are redeemed from the power and dominion of sin and death, not by corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. Whatever God hath wrought to accomplish the salvation of men may be considered as rendering the death of his saints precious in his sight. Here may be reckoned the



humiliation and incarnation of the Son of God, his holy life, his heavenly doctrines, the attestation that was given to the divine mission of the Son of God by miracles and prophecies, his unwearied labors and fervent prayers, his ignominious sufferings and death, his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, and intercession at the right hand of God for his church, and his constant care and protection of it, his promise always to be with his disciples, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church, also the institution of the sacred ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the appointment of a Gospel Ministry. Through the intercession of Christ the Holy Spirit is given to reside in the heart of believers to quicken, renew and sanctify them, and to comfort them under the trials and afflictions of life, and to fit them for eternal blessedness. Those, who receive Christ Jesus for their Saviour and enlist under his banner, and serve God with faithfulness, are promised help and succour in an hour of temptation. They shall not be tempted above that they are able to bear. The grace of God, which they shall receive, shall be sufficient for them. Whatever may be their weakness, through Christ strengthening them, they shall be able to do all things necessary for them to accomplish. Armor is provided for them with which they may repel the darts of satan and overcome all their spiritual enemies. From them the sting of death shall be removed. They shall triumph over death and the grave, and give thanks unto God, who giveth them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. As the great Shepherd of Israel, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and Bishop of the souls of men, is with them to feed and protect them in life, so he will not forsake them in the hour of death ; but will be present with them. When they are passing the dark and gloomy valley of the shadow of death, his rod and staff will comfort them, and they may fear no evil.



The true believer, at the approach of death, may, with faith and confidence, adopt the prayer of the martyr Stephen, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Now when so glorious, so condescending, so wonderful have been, and continue to be, the operation of God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to accomplish our salvation, not only precious in the sight of the Lord must be the life of his saints, the time of their probation, when they are preparing for this state of happiness; but also precious in the sight of the Lord must be the death of his saints, when they enter into this state of glory and blessedness provided for them.

4thly. That precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, is manifest from the ministry of the holy angels. Angels, those bright intelligences attend around the throne of God, and delight to do his will; "they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." They encamp around the dwellings of the just to deliver them from evil and rescue them from danger. Undoubtedly many of the benefits and blessings of providence are, by ways to us unseen and unknown, conveyed by the ministry of angels. That angels are sent from the courts of heaven to convey the souls of the just to the abodes of the blessed, we have clear intimations from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. "The beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Angels rejoiced at the creation of the world. When God laid the foundation of the earth, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They rejoiced at the birth of the Saviour, and proclaimed the joyful tidings to the shepherds of Bethlehem. Then the heavenly host sang, "glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; good will to men." They rejoice at the prevalence of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world.



"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Great must be their joy when they introduce the spirits of the just to the assembly of angels and saints in the presence of God, to participate their refined felicity, to join with them in the most exalted strains of praise and thanksgiving to God and the Redeemer. How great will be the joy of the Redeemer, how great the joy of the angels and all the saints after the resurrection and judgment, when all the redeemed and sanctified from all kindreds, nations, tongues and people shall be assembled around the throne of God! Then all the saints shall join concert with all the holy angels to celebrate the praises of God. Then all the saints shall ascribe all their glory and blessedness to him that redeemed them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and exalted them to glory and dignity beyond what they imagined in their state of probation. Then shall the Redeemer "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" and receive "the joys that were set before him," when he endured the pains and ignominies of the cross.

If the death of his saints be precious in the sight of God, then it shall take place in the time and manner God has allotted: the time, when it is best adapted for the benefit of his saints, and best calculated to promote the important and benevolent designs of the divine government. The death of Christ was not accomplished by his inveterate enemies until his hour was come, till the time arrived that was allotted by the eternal Father. Until that time the malice and power of his enemies could not accomplish their ungodly devices. So of the redeemed by Christ, the saints of the Lord, no malice or violence, nothing which we term accidents, no operation of the elements, no sickness or disease can effect their death till the time God has assigned.



ed. David, who most probably was the author of the psalm from which our text is taken, was persecuted of Saul. Many and powerful enemies sought his destruction. Yet all their attempts were vain. The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. And he devoutly ascribes his deliverance, protection and safety unto God. Whatever dangers may surround the children of God, whatever diseases may fasten upon them, yet shall they be continued in life until the time is elapsed that God has assigned them. Then the time will have come when their death shall be precious in the sight of God. Then shall they be freed from all the calamities of life and received to a state of eternal felicity.

What consolation must it give to those who are mourning the loss of friends and relatives, to have a good hope that they are of the number of the saints of the Lord, whose death is precious in his sight. The time which God allots is the best time to answer the wise and gracious designs of the divine government. However we may be overwhelmed with grief at the death of friends, yet wise purposes are answered thereby, which to us are unknown. Clouds and darkness are round about the throne of God, which the eyes of our weak understandings cannot penetrate; but all the determinations of God and all his works are holy, wise, just and good. Whatever may be our afflictions and sorrows, we ought to rejoice that the Lord reigneth. If we consider our dear friends as received to the paradise of God and among the assembly of the first-born, celebrating the praises of God and the Redeemer, why should we regret that God hath taken them to himself? Why should we grieve that they are removed from a world of sin and affliction, of sorrow and temptation? We have reason rather to weep for ourselves, who are yet con-



tinued in the world, subject to the temptations and calamities of it. But let us look to our Redeemer and have confidence in him. Said he to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The doctrine contained in our text may give consolation on this very melancholy occasion, on which we are now assembled, to inter the remains of this aged, venerable and faithful servant of the living God, who long sustained the sacred office of a Minister of the everlasting Gospel, and shined as a bright ornament to his profession. To do justice to a character so eminent is too difficult to be accomplished. His strict piety, his manifest sincerity, uprightness, and integrity were such that all, who were acquainted with him, would be ready to ascribe to him the character, which our blessed Lord gave to Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." He was ready, diligent and faithful to discharge every duty incumbent on him. His disposition was the most amiable and benevolent. He was given to hospitality, a lover of good men, and a man greatly beloved. He endured afflictions with firmness and fortitude, with patience and resignation to the will of God. He appeared so rigidly to adhere to the ways of rectitude, and whatever appeared to him the path of duty so carefully, conscientiously and resolutely to pursue it, that no sinister views or allurements could prevail with him to deviate from it. Without the greatest uncharitableness, we cannot ascribe the rectitude and regularity of his life and conversation to any other than the best of principles, love to God, christian benevolence, faith in the Redeemer, and an hope of future blessedness.



The REV. JOSEPH KIDDER, was born at Billerica, Mass. November 29, 1741, educated at Yale College in Connecticut, and was graduated in 1764. He was ordained Pastor of this Church, March 18th, 1767. In discharging the duties of the sacred office, when he was the mouth of the assembly, offering their addresses at the throne of grace, he was particular in specifying their wants and desires. His discourses were grave and solemn, exhibiting with perspicuity the great and important doctrines and duties of christianity. He was attentive in visiting the sick, and careful to discharge all the duties of the pastoral office. He exhibited a good example to his flock. His doctrines and example coincided. At length difficulties arising in respect to his civil contract, it was dissolved by mutual consent and by advice of an ecclesiastical counsel, June 15th, 1796. But he still continued his pastoral relation, visiting the sick, administering the sacred ordinances, officiating at funeral solemnities, comforting mourners. Nothing could abate his love and affection for this church and flock of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could abate his zeal and desire for their welfare, which he was ready to do all in his power to promote. Ardent were his desires, fervent his prayers, and assiduous his endeavors to promote the cause of truth and righteousness. In all the relations he sustained, he was amiable and exemplary: a kind husband, an affectionate parent, a faithful friend. The harmony prevailing in the domestic circle, to which he was happily united, did not fail of the notice and approbation of all that beheld it. But however exemplary his life and conversation, however zealous, diligent and faithful in serving God and his generation, and however beloved and esteemed among men; yet his life is terminated and his virtues can be continued among men only



in the memory of survivors. Those, who beheld his example, who were benefited by his instructions, and were subjects of his prayers, have surely cause to rejoice that his life was so long protracted: and however they mourn and regret his departure, yet are called upon to submit to the will of God now that he is removed from them. The prayers of righteous men avail much with God; they draw down the blessings of God on society: it is oftentimes on their account that the destruction of a wicked people is deferred or prevented. But righteous men are taken away. We may cry to God for help and succor, when the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail from among the children of men. Whatever changes take place in the world, yet God is the same and changeth not. His ear is always open to the cries of the afflicted. Earthly friends may fail, but God is the never failing friend of all that fear him and trust in him. His mercy, as his being, endureth forever.

The condition of the bereaved Widow demands our condolence, our pity and prayers.

MADAM,

We sympathize with you under this heavy trial. May the God of all grace support you under it. It is to religious considerations we must have recourse for consolation under such gloomy scenes. It is the hand of God, who, though he hath manifested himself in his word and works, a God of infinite majesty and terrible in his judgments, yet hath exhibited himself as the God of goodness and mercy, of love and compassion. It is the voice of his word, "Be still and know that I am God." He that gave life and intelligence hath a right to take them away. The same Almighty Being who visits us with adversity, if we look to him for aid, will sustain us under our trials, will sanctify all afflictions however distressing, and cause them to terminate



in our advantage. He hath promised that all things shall work together for good to them that love God. Death hath reigned as a triumphant conqueror. But He, who passed a sentence of death on man at his apostacy, hath sent his Son into the world, who hath abolished death, and brought to light life and immortality. The hope and expectation of a glorious resurrection, when we shall meet all our dear friends who have died in the Lord, to be separated from them no more, may comfort us concerning those who are fallen asleep. Then death will be swallowed up in victory. It is now an article of faith, then it will be manifest to the assembled universe, that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

Long and severe have been your trials and afflictions: God hath supported you under them: you may still trust in him. He will remember and reward your care and kind attention to his servant, your partner deceased. By the consolations of his word and spirit may you still be supported and sustained in your declining years; and when called hence, be received to that world, where all the children of God shall be assembled to separate no more, and where all sorrow and sighing shall cease.

Many are the promises of the most high God in his holy word to the widow and the desolate. God hath revealed himself the father of the fatherless and judge of the widow in his holy habitation.

The bereaved condition of the Children of the deceased call for our sympathy. It is to religious considerations we must also have recourse to comfort them under afflictions. Though one of your parents, justly esteemed and honored by you, is removed from you, yet it is your gracious heavenly Father, who hath taken him away, to whose will it is always our duty to submit. And if you exercise patience and sub-



mission under your trials, he will amply compensate you. Walk uprightly before him and no real good shall be withholden from you. Remember your Creator, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind, and the blessings he will bestow upon you will be infinitely more valuable than all the good that the most powerful and indulgent among earthly parents can bestow. Let the memory of your deceased parent be always dear. Remember the pious advice, counsels and admonitions he hath given you. Honor your surviving parent. Support her in her declining years. The greatest comfort you can afford her in her desolate situation will be steadily to adhere to the practice of virtue, integrity and holiness. Nothing can be more solacing to those of advanced age and declining years, than to behold children succeeding them, who will do honor to their memory when they are removed from earthly scenes, and whom they will hope to meet again hereafter and to reside with them forever in the regions of blessedness. Cultivate brotherly love and strive to promote harmony among yourselves. In a word, carefully imbibe the principles and pursue the practice of pure and undefiled Religion, and you will honor the memory of your deceased parent, be a comfort to your parent surviving, be honored in the world, receive the favor of your heavenly Father and be entitled to an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Contemplating the integrity and exemplary virtues of your deceased parent, you may derive consolation from the consideration of the happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect. When absent from the body they are present with the Lord. Your hope and confidence in the divine favor and protection may be increased and confirmed by adverting to that saying of an inspired writer, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."



This Church and Flock of our Lord Jesus Christ are called to mourn and lament that their aged and venerable Pastor, who for a long time labored among them in word and doctrine, is removed from them, you (especially those of you who are aged, who sat under his ministry while his labors were stationary among you) may be urged to call to mind his pious counsel, warning and instruction. You have been witnesses to his ardor and fervency at the throne of grace, when he was the mouth of the assembly offering up your petitions unto God. You have been witnesses to his skilful division of the words of truth, unfolding the doctrines of the everlasting gospel and displaying them to your view, inviting and urging you to receive the choicest blessings, urging the promises and threatenings of the word of God and the sacred duties it enjoins. Tender were his affections towards you, sympathising with you under your afflictions, weeping with those that wept, as well as rejoicing in your prosperity. He largely shared in the afflictions of the gospel, and you have been witnesses with what patience he endured them. You have been witnesses to his exemplary conduct and conversation, in that he lived according to the doctrines he inculcated. Our great Lord and Master was pleased to protract his life to an advanced age, he having almost completed his 77th year. But now God has removed him from you, and we trust he has gone to receive the happy reward of his labors, to join with the glorious company of saints and angels in the presence of God, joyfully to meet those of his flock who have gone before him, to have eternal communion with them, raised above the trials, sorrows and sufferings of a state of mortality. Honor his memory by living as the gospel, which he preached, teaches you. Imitate him in all those things wherein he hath imitated our great Lord and Master. By this melancholy instance of mortality be quickened to prepare for death, judgment and eternity.



We rejoice that you are not left as sheep without a shepherd. That God in his providence has appointed a successor to the deceased in the sacred office. God grant that he may long be continued a wise leader and faithful shepherd. Attend on his ministration. Give earnest heed to his instructions. Endeavor to grow in grace, in knowledge and virtue, and in the fear of the Lord.

We would condole with the Pastor of this flock, the colleague and successor of the pastor deceased.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

Persons, whose character is like that of your venerable predecessor, are the salt of the earth and shine as lights in the world. They oftentimes stand in the gap, and by their prayers and intercessions prevail to avert the anger of the Most High, to remove his judgments, and prevent the destruction of a wicked generation of men. When you consider the piety, the integrity, the bright example of the revered character deceased, you cannot but mourn and regret that you shall hear his voice and see his face no more! You may be ready to adopt the pathetic exclamation of the prophet Elisha when Elijah was taken from him and received up into heaven, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" God grant that you may possess a double portion of the spirit of your predecessor. Taking up his mantle as successor in the sacred office, may you derive consolation and fortitude from faith and confidence in God. May your faith and confidence in the presence, power and protection of God be increased and confirmed. Relying on God, looking to him for aid, may the waters of affliction subside and every impediment and obstruction to usefulness be removed. May your life and ministry be long and prosperous, and your labors in the vineyard of the Lord be crowned with success. And when called hence



may you obtain the approbation of our great Lord and Master, and your memory on earth be blessed.

**MY BRETHREN IN THE MINISTRY,**

We are called to lament the frequent breaches made in the sacred order by the grim tyrant. Not only is there a breach made in this society by the death of this aged and venerable servant of the living God, but also the towns of Dublin, Brookline, Litchfield and the West-Parish in Londonderry have been bereaved of their Pastors. By these repeated strokes of providence God is calling upon us, who survive, and still remain watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, to be ready and prepared to meet him. Let us be quickened to greater diligence and watchfulness in the labors of the sacred office. Let us work while life is protracted. As to some of us, advanced age, grey hairs and increasing infirmities teach us that the time of dissolution is drawing near. May we all continue faithful in the service of God until death, and then receive a crown of life.

This whole assembly may be reminded of the frail and mortal state of man. In a little time, those who preach and those that hear the preached word, must be numbered with the dead and appear at the tribunal of God. "Your fathers where are they, and the prophets do they live forever?" Let us all hear the voice of God as uttered by his word and the dispensation of his providence, and let none of us harden our hearts. May we all be found among the number of his saints whose death is precious in the sight of God,



## SUMMARY HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN DUNSTABLE, N.H.

BY REV. E. P. SPERRY.

IT will be acknowledged that this history is imperfect, as only scraps of the early records have been found, and some dates and names have been supplied by the uncertain recollection of aged persons. The records of this church have not been made ; or have, by some disaster, been lost. These remarks must be the writer's apology, for unavoidable mistakes or defects.

Old Dunstable comprised the following towns, viz. Litchfield, and a corner of Londonderry, all of Nottingham-West and Tyngsborough ; Massachusetts' Dunstable and Pepperell, as far as the old line of Groton ; Townsend, Holles and Brookline ; and all of Milford, Amherst and Merrimack, which lie on the south east side of Souhegan river ; which extensive tract of land was granted to five individuals.

The Church of Christ in this place was gathered in the year of our Lord 1685. Seven male members, exclusive of their pastor, constituted their whole number. These were their names, Jonathan Tyng, John Cummings, senior, John Blanchard, Cornelius Waldo, Samuel Warner, Obadiah Perry and Samuel French.



The first settled minister in this place was THOMAS WELD, who graduated at Harvard College 1671 ; and probably took the charge of this church at the time of its organization, 1685. His first wife Elizabeth ———, died July 19th, 1687, aged 31. A rough flat stone lying horizontally points out the place of her interment. Among the descendants of Mr. Weld, a tradition prevails, that he was killed by the Indians, who beset his garrison in April or May, 1702 ; but the most aged inhabitants in this vicinity have no knowledge of the fact. A rough flat stone with no inscription upon it, is his only monument. It is stated in a letter written by Rev. Joseph Kidder to one of his descendants, " that he was esteemed in his day, a man of great piety, an exemplary christian and a very respectable clergyman."

Rev. NATHANIEL PRENTICE, graduated at Harvard College, 1715. Allowing three years for his preparatory studies and to preach as a candidate, he might have been settled here as early as 1718. His wife's maiden name was Mary Tyng. A son of theirs by the name of Nathaniel Prentice, aged eight weeks, died 1724, whose monument with fair inscription is yet standing. It is said of Mr. Prentice, that he was a man of wit and a good sermonizer. He died in the year 1735. There is an appearance of a grave near that of Rev. T. Weld, with rough stones placed at each end of the grave, having no inscription and is said to be his.

Rev. JOSEPH SWAN, graduated at Cambridge College in the year 1733. He was settled in the ministry in this place, as near as can be ascertained, in 1736. His wife's name before marriage was Rachel Blanchard, of a respectable family in this town. His dismission took place 1746, in consequence of a division of the town, by running the line between the colonies of New-Hampshire and Massachusetts. No charges were brought against his character. He continued in



this town for several years and was occasionally employed to preach. He removed from here to Lancaster, and from thence to Walpole, where he died, and where some of his descendants are yet living.

Rev. SAMUEL BIRD, was the fourth settled minister of this town. As his name is not found on either of the catalogues of New-Haven or Cambridge, no evidence has appeared, that he had received a collegiate education. He received a call to settle here, from the church, July 6th, 1747, and from the town, August 31st, of the same year. He was called in his day a new-light. But his light in this place was soon extinguished. A new church was organized out of the old; and a new meeting-house was erected for his accommodation. Though he was settled over the *town*, his society assumed the appearance of a party. It appears from a result of council, that dismissed him, that he did not possess that temperate zeal, and that knowledge of human nature which was requisite to unite contending parties and build up the broken walls of Zion. He was dismissed in the year 1751. He was afterwards installed over one of the churches in New-Haven, (Con.) and again removed. He performed for some time the duties of a chaplain in the revolutionary army. The time or place of his death is not known.

In the year 1759, a council was called to look into the difficulties in this place, being two churches and two houses of worship, and no minister. By the instrumentality of that council a union was effected, and soon after, Mr. Bird's meeting-house was pulled down and turned into a dwelling-house.

Rev. Josiah Cotton, had a call to settle in this place, December 18th, 1758, and a council was appointed; but his installation was by some means prevented.



Mr. Jonathan Livermore, also received a call, July 19th, 1762, to which it seems he gave no answer.

Mr. Thomas Fessenden, received a call, August 9th, 1764; whose settlement was prevented by the opposition made to his sentiments.

Rev. JOSEPH KIDDER, received his call to settle here, November 29th, 1766.

Previous to the present Pastor's settlement this church was statedly supplied 77 years. Occasionally supplied or destitute 51 years.

| <i>Names.</i>       | <i>Ordained.</i> | <i>Died.</i>      | <i>Supplied.</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Thomas Weld,        | 1685             | 1702              | 17               |
| Nathaniel Prentice, | 1713             | 1735              | 17               |
|                     |                  | <i>Dismissed.</i> |                  |
| Josiah Swan,        | 1736             | 1746              | 10               |
| Samuel Bird,        | 1747             | 1751              | 4                |
| Joseph Kidder,      | 1767             | 1796              | 29               |
| Ebenezer P. Sperry, | 1813             | —                 | 5                |



